

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 20/3/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for the baptism of Hope and Obi and for the worship of God's people gathered together in Christ.

In today's encouragement we continue John 17 with Sanctified by the truth. Before moving onto church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Sanctified by the Truth

How do we live in the world when we are not of the world? It is hard living in a place where people's customs are different to yours, where the language is different. We can make mistakes and say the wrong thing, like the language student in Türkiye who went to say, "Pleased to meet you," and instead said, "I became a monkey." We do not belong in the world and as those who do not belong in the world we have a book that helps us to live, not in the way of the world, but in the way of the God who loves us. This is the subject of Jesus praying this week as we work through John 17.

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

John

17:15-19

Jesus is praying for them as they are in the world. He has been praying that God would protect them from the evil one as we have seen in previous weeks. Now he builds on that praying, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." The word sanctify means "to separate, to make holy". It has the sense of separating holy things from profane things. So here Jesus is praying that the disciples might be separated from the world as those who belong to him. They bear the mark of holiness upon their lives, the very character of heaven.

The word of God is instrumental in sanctifying them – setting them apart and making them holy. First they are set apart by the gospel and faith in Christ. The gospel declares that they are cleansed from sin and now belong to God. They are set apart for the Lord. Second, the truth of God brings change and transformation as the Holy Spirit presses the Word against our souls and brings our lives into conformity with God's revealed truth. So while we live in the world, we do not live according to its values and morals but rather live by the new and living way revealed in Jesus.

It is in being set apart by the truth of God, his very word, that Jesus sends them in to the world to continue his mission. Jesus is sent into the world to save sinners. He sends his disciples into the world to declare the cross so sinners might repent and believe and be saved. As those who do not belong to the world, they are present in the world to make Jesus known and point to his work on the cross and rising from the grave.

Now, after praying for them to be sanctified by the truth, Jesus speaks how he sanctifies himself. What does he mean by that? Jesus sets himself apart as a sacrifice for his people. It is like how animals of the flock in the Old Testament were set apart to be a burnt offering to the LORD for the atonement of his people. So Jesus is the sacrifice of atonement that makes his people holy. His death on the cross is what makes us holy and pleasing, acceptable in God's sight. The work of the Word in our lives brings to light what God has already achieved for us in Christ.

We are those who are in the world and do not belong to the world. This means we are marked by the cross. We are declared holy by Jesus' death on the cross as those who belong to God. Do people around know we belong to Jesus? It means that we take our cue for living from God's word, to live in the new way revealed in Christ. It is God's word by the Spirit that changes our lives and character to show that we belong to Jesus. What importance does the word have in your life? Can people see the effect of the Spirit's transforming work in your life to apply the word to your life?

As always, love and prayers,
Steve